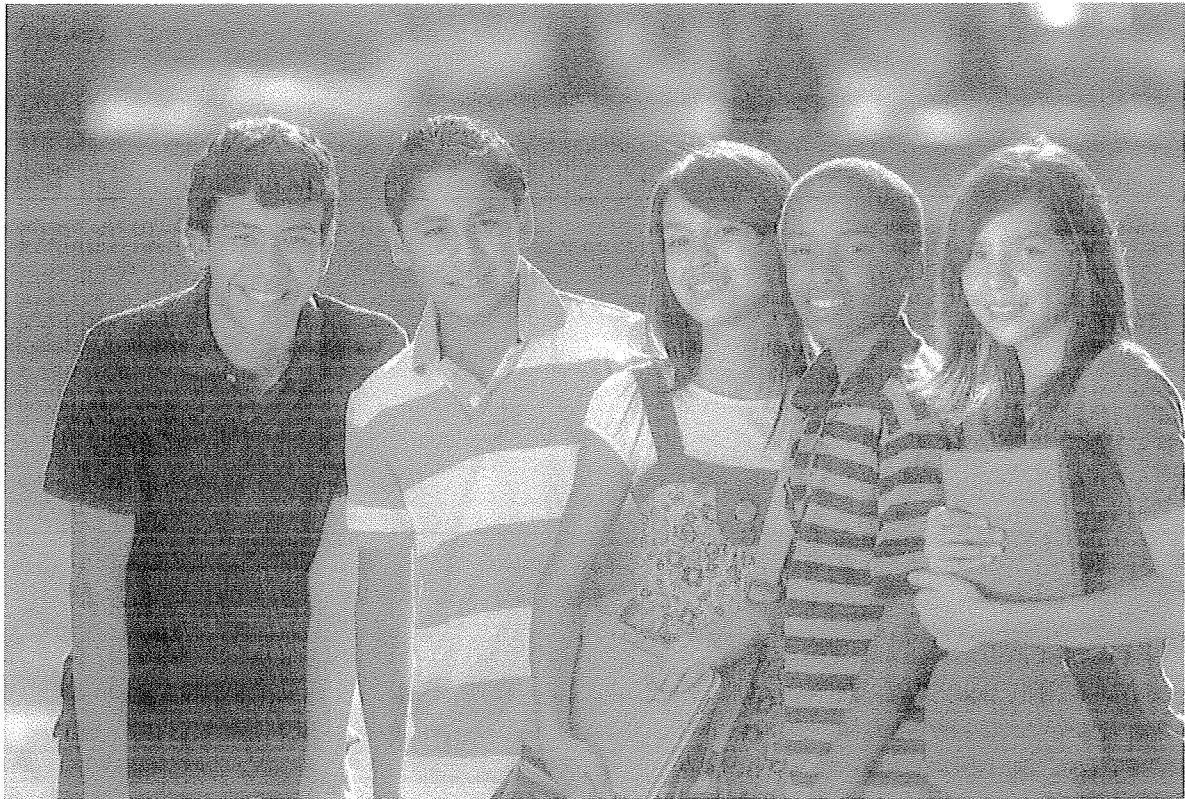




Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.



# Inspiring Action on Education

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engager

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of Alberta ■**

## A Framework for New Education Legislation

The last major revision to the *School Act* occurred in 1988, and provided the legislative foundation for Alberta's education system for more than twenty years. In 2009, the Minister of Education, Honourable Dave Hancock, launched a review of the *School Act* in order to proactively prepare for the outcomes of the various public engagement initiatives described in this paper.

### The Need for New Legislation

New legislation is a key component in the realization of a long-term vision for education that ensures that all students experience success and have the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New education legislation is needed that will outline a philosophical shift by the provincial government in the provision of K-12 education. New or revised legislation will help stimulate the education system to chart a new course, enhance the ministry's responsiveness in meeting system and stakeholder needs, and allow for more system autonomy.

### Key Areas of Change

Future legislation will be more enabling, empowering, supportive, and less prescriptive. It will describe a framework that focuses on reducing systemic barriers, is forward-looking and allows the education system to be more flexible and able to respond to the diverse learning needs of students more quickly and effectively. While this enabling legislation will establish higher order policy direction to ensure, for example, equitable access to quality education, it will also encourage creativity and innovation and open the door to greater possibilities.

Key areas of change for new legislation will be based on the following:

- lower the minimum age for funded access to children who, at September 1 in a year, are at least 3 years, six months of age;
- raise the upper age limit for funded access to those individuals who, at September 1, are under 21 years of age;
- raise compulsory school attendance from 16 years to 17 years of age;
- all children who are legally resident in Alberta have a right of access to the K-12 public education system;
- students should be able to access instruction in a variety of settings, times and at a pace that reflects their individual needs;
- student success is the primary goal of the education system and government has a responsibility to provide the structure and supports to allow students and their parents the opportunity to explore different paths and directions;
- the connection of local communities to schools and elected school boards, as well as the connection of students to their communities, is an important element in the success of our public school system. Government has a responsibility to determine the structure of school boards, to set provincial standards for the roles and responsibilities of boards, and to support maximizing trustee and board competence; and
- ensure a balance between local autonomy and fiscal responsibility.

## **Benefits of New Legislation**

The anticipated impacts of new legislation include:

- improved accessibility and responsiveness to meet the needs of all Alberta students. For example, students being able to access education at their own pace on their own time (recognizing that education occurs beyond the boundaries of a school building), and creating a more inclusive education system for those with diverse learning needs;
- increased understanding of what it means to be an educated person in the global context and how educating Alberta students is in the public interest;
- developing stronger relationships between Alberta Education, other ministries, non-profit voluntary groups and key stakeholders based on a shared governance model which empowers stakeholders to deliver educational programs and services and be accountable for that delivery;
- greater involvement of Albertans beyond those directly involved in the delivery of education including parents, the community, and previously un- and under-represented groups; and
- reduced administrative burden by limiting the number and extent of requirements imposed on the education system to those areas of highest risk or critical importance. Furthermore, new or revised legislation should only set out basic requirements and allow for flexibility, where appropriate, in implementing the requirements.

Following the introduction of new legislation, a full regulatory review will be conducted. However, it is recognized that many of the characteristics of the new education system cannot be legislated, either in the new Act or in new regulations.

[“Share Your Ideas!” on why transformation of the education system is needed by clicking here.](#)

## Guiding Statements

The vision, values and principles describe the purpose, motives and intentions that underpin our education system, and which guide and are reflected in each area of policy and governance.

### Vision

**To inspire and enable students to achieve success and fulfillment as engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit within an inclusive education system.**

### Values

Values describe the ideals we seek to embrace and fulfill in the operation of the education system. This discussion paper adopts the following values from the *Inspiring Education Steering Committee Report*:

- Opportunity:** Learners are exposed to rich learning experiences that enable them to discover their passions and achieve their highest potential.
- Fairness:** Learners have access to the programs, support services, and instructional excellence needed to achieve desired outcomes.
- Citizenship:** Learners have pride in their community and culture. They have a sense of belonging and work to improve both the community and the world.
- Choice:** Learners have a choice of both programs and methods of learning.
- Diversity:** Learners' differing needs, cultures, and abilities are respected and valued within inclusive learning environments.
- Excellence:** Learners, teachers, and governors achieve high standards.

## Principles

Principles promote a common understanding of new policy directions and are the basis of sound and consistent decisions. Achieving our vision for the future of education in Alberta requires that the following principles, as described in the *Inspiring Education Steering Committee Report*, be embraced by all partners in education, including parents and families, teachers, support staff, school boards, government, businesses, communities and not-for-profit organizations.

**Learner-centred.** Decision makers should consider the needs of children and youth first and foremost when making decisions.

**Shared responsibility and accountability for results.** Acknowledging that parents are the primary guides and decision-makers for children, all partners in education should share responsibility and accountability for education outcomes.

**Engaged communities.** Community resources should be more fully engaged to support learners, including expertise, facilities, services and learning opportunities. Community resources—whether local, provincial, national or global—should actively participate in the education of learners.

**Inclusive, equitable access.** Every learner should have fair and reasonable access to educational opportunities regardless of ability, economic circumstance, location, or cultural background. Their needs and ways of life should be respected and valued within an inclusive learning environment. Some learners will require additional, specialized supports to fully access these opportunities.

**A responsive, flexible approach.** Children and youth should have meaningful learning opportunities appropriate to each learner's developmental stage, including learning that is experiential, multi-disciplinary, community-based, and self-paced. To ensure the learning opportunities are relevant, the education system must be nimble in responding to the changing needs of communities and the world.

**Sustainable and efficient use of resources.** Decision-makers should identify and adopt strategies that optimize resources (financial and human) and minimize duplication.

**Innovation to promote and strive for excellence.** Creativity and innovation are central to achieving excellence in education. Learners, educators and governors must be creative, innovative and entrepreneurial to attain the highest possible standards.

[“Share Your Ideas!” on the guiding statements by clicking here.](#)